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Memorandum

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: Mean, median, or mode

Now that I have stopped shouting at my TV when I hear reporters say “data is” (24 January 2019), I am much better. I just let it roll over me without any muttering. This change, no doubt, would have pleased my dear departed wife. Now I can boast, as in the lyrics of “*I’m an ordinary man*” from My Fair Lady, that

I’m a quiet living man
Who prefers to spend the evening in the silence of his room
Who likes an atmosphere as restful as an undiscovered tomb
A pensive man am I of philosophical joys
Who likes to meditate, contemplate
Free from humanity’s mad inhuman noise
Just a quiet living man

But I still wonder what announcers mean when they report that the average donation for candidate X’s presidential run was \$40. I know “average” is not the mean contribution because the number is too neat; 40 dollars. I do not trust means that end in zero.

So if it is not mean contribution than it must be the median or modal contribution. I doubt it is the median contribution by the same reasoning for means. When is the last time you had a median that ended in zero?

That leaves mode. The announcer must mean that the most common amount donated was \$40 so why not say that instead of “average”?

But now with my transformation I just let the imprecision of language roll off like water on a duck’s back without a word to my TV!

Free, free at last.

How sweet it is!